1: Duke E-5 (1961-62) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17
Hindus

puts a few handfuls of earth in the grave. In the case of a burial all persons present at the spot take a hand in filling the grave. When the pyre is burnt half-way, or when the grave is filled up, the people return home, bathing on the way. 764

What happens to the soul of the dead? If the death is on an auspicious day and time, the soul goes straight to the Supreme Being; ordinarily it hovers round the house—mainly on the roof, above the main entrance—for eleven to thirteen days. This is the stereotype description; but further analysis reveals a rather diffused belief-pattern: (i) near the place of burial or cremation the person dwells in a ghost-like form; (ii) the soul goes to God, where according to the deeds of the deceased in his life-time it is sent to heaven or hell; (iii) it takes re-birth, often within a few days of the death—as a human being or in some other species; (iv) it can be called back through prescribed ritual to reside with the other ancestor-spirits in the house. Some of these explanations appear to be contradictory, but people believe in them all at once. 775

On the third day after death the first purificatory rites take place, involving the cleansing of the house, washing of all household linen and clothes, and the throwing away of all earthen pots used for cooking or for storing water. On the eleventh or thirteenth day further purificatory rites are performed which remove the ritual impurity of members of the household. On this day food and water are offered to the soul of the deceased, near relations have a hair-cut and bath (on the death of the father or mother all the hair on the head as well as moustache and beard must be shaved) and a feast is given. Among the higher castes a Brahmin belonging to one of the nearby villages comes and conducts the rites on this day; others follow their own caste customs. These higher castes collect the bones from the cremation ground and immerse them in a holy river—generally in the Godavari, which is the nearest to Shamirpet, but in exceptional cases in the Ganges, which is regarded as the holiest of all rivers by the Hindus all over India. As pointed out earlier, in the Petramasa fortnight water is offered to the ancestor-spirits; and during the first Petramasa after death the soul of the deceased is invited to 'come back' and is lodged with the spirits of the other ancestors in one corner of the house. 768 765 769

Abnormal deaths require a special treatment. A woman dying 800

RITUAL STRUCTURE

Abnormal deaths & special treatment, A woman dying
766 in pregnancy, a young man dying without sexual satisfaction, or a person dying without having satisfied any of his deep cravings, will all experience difficulty in their rehabilitation in the supernatural world, and their souls will keep on returning to the world [775] of the living periodically. These are the persons who often turn into ghosts, reside permanently in the village and create difficulties in the normal life of the community. To undo their evil special skills must be employed.

764 Muslim death customs differ from those of the Hindus. The toes of the corpse are tied together with a cord; and a small bundle of salt is placed on the stomach to prevent its swelling. Friends and relations gather together and make preparations for the funeral. A new cloth, to cover the body, is bought, and the communal wooden box used for carrying the dead to the graveyard is requisitioned. The corpse of a man is covered with three pieces of cloth; that of a woman with five pieces. Camphor powder is sprinkled on the forehead, eyes, palms and legs of the deceased. It is customary to sprinkle some perfume also. Relations and friends have a last look at the deceased, and then put the corpse in the wooden box. The box is lifted by four men, and carried to the mosque by the male relations and friends. As they go, people keep on repeating, 'There is no god except Allah'. Funeral prayers are said there, and the procession resumes its journey towards the graveyard. The corpse is put in the grave, passages from the Koran are read, and then the grave is filled up. All those who accompany the bier put some earth in the grave, reciting passages from the Koran. When this has been done, all step forty paces from the burial place, and return to it again saying prayers (*fatiha*) for
765 the deceased and invoking the Almighty's blessings for him. For two days after the death 'there must be no fire in the hearth', and food for the bereaved family is sent by near relations. On the third day prayers are said in the mosque and, later, flowers are placed on the grave by the relations of the deceased. This is done on the tenth day also. On the fortieth day all those who have participated in the funeral assemble together. Prayers are said again, and some people go to lay flowers on the grave. This is followed by a dinner. On the occasion of the death anniversary, flowers are again laid on the grave, prayers said, and a dinner is given in memory of the deceased.